

Bring Spring In!

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**Bring Spring In!**

**By Kathleen Wilson**

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Fresh, Frugal Ideas!

Here are some great ideas for bringing the freshness of spring into your home.

Sponge paint your walls, or a key piece of furniture. Blues, greens, pinks, and yellows in pastel shades refresh a room, and the softness of sponging gives an "impressionistic" appeal.

Take clippings from outdoor ivy, and root in water for FREE houseplants. Buy inexpensive shade annuals and pot them up for indoors– fuchsias, impatiens, begonias, and primroses are wonderful for bringing in color, and deal well with the lower light indoors.

Dress up candles as natural works of art instead of putting them away for the warm months. Use a glue gun to attach organic materials such as dried twigs, flowers, cinnamon sticks, worn out potpourri, pressed leaves, coffee beans...use what you have! Or, tie on raffia or ribbon and group candles on a shelf, tabletop, or on a mirror.

Paint inexpensive houseplant pots to give your room designer touches. Sponge paint over clay pots, or use a stencil or simple pattern to give interest. This technique can also be used on your outdoor pots. Hint: for a more elegant look, try using the new metallic craft paints over clay pots. Simply sponging on some metallic paint (try combing them) can look extremely upscale.

Got an old wooden stepladder? Use it as a great plant stand to bring the green indoors. You can paint it or leave it rustic and weathered, depending on the style of your room. Full size wooden ladders can look great on the patio.

Add spring detail to your window treatments by using small grapevine wreaths as tiebacks or swag holders. You can add more interest by gluing on a small bunch of dried flowers. This is a great way to reuse flowers from a damaged arrangement, or leftovers from another project.

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Buy artificial plant vines at the craft store, and drape them over the tops of your window treatments, or wrap them around a floor lamp. Watch the craft stores carefully, and you can usually catch them on sale for just a couple of bucks.

Cover cardboard boxes with fresh floral fabric, and stack on a table like hatboxes. If you utilize scraps from another project, you will have creative, decorative storage, virtually free!

Give your kitchen a garden window by installing cheap shelving across the inside frame. This can be nothing more than a small wooden block nailed into the frame on each side, and a simple board resting on top of them. Fill this with plants and cuttings, and you will have big impact. Bonus; the plants will thrive in the bright light, and moisture of the kitchen. Caution: Do not do this in a south facing window...the direct sun is just too much for most houseplant.

Paint small paper mache bird houses and hang them from your curtain rod, or the bottom of a shelf or cabinet. I found them at my craft store for 50 cents, or you could easily make them from small cardboard containers and paper mache paste.

Use those beautiful pictures from your garden catalogs to frame into botanical prints, who will know!

Use gold spray paint left over from the holidays to transform small clay pots and saucers into coasters and silverware caddies. They stack well, too, and best of all, they're cheap!

Make an herb drying rack for your kitchen by nailing small wire brads into cheap lathing strip, or better yet, an aged piece of wood you might find, even driftwood! You can make and hang just one, or several together to make a large wall arrangement. You can gather flowers, herbs, even grasses to dry directly on the rack from your own yard. I recommend using a rubber band to secure them, as plant material shrinks when it dries. You can cover the rubber band with ribbon or raffia if you wish.

Save those clear bottles and fill with colored water for a bright accent in a window. Use your glue gun to dress up the bottle caps with organic odds and ends...beans, lentils, dried flowers, you get the idea.

Never underestimate how much impact a small container of fresh flowers can have in a room, even just a pretty cup full of roadside daisies!

A couple of packets of seeds can keep a house in cut bouquets all summer. Sunflower, cosmos, and zinnias are VERY easy to grow, and are great in arrangements.

Replace heavy window treatments with a simple drape of gauzy fabric. This type of material is very inexpensive at the fabric store, or keep your eye out for tablecloths that can be pressed into service.(Watch those garage sales!)

Need more ideas for warm weather windows? Simply hang cloth napkins or placemats over the rod. Experiment with overlapping, laying them on the diagonal, or tying them with ribbon. Cherry valance that ties right in with your kitchen or dining area!

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Make easy, virtually free ivy topiaries. Pot up your ivy cuttings (straight from the yard, or a neighbors) then form a wire coat hanger into your desire shape. You may need pliers to help you with this. Insert the hooked end into the pot, and secure by pushing sticks, or bamboo skewers into the soil on either side of the wire. Secure the wire to the skewers with twisty ties, then cut the skewers of level with the wire. Wrap the ivy around the wire from the base upwards, and continue to tuck and wrap as it grows. Very soon the ivy will completely cover the wire, and you'll never know it was a free coat hanger, instead of a 20 dollar topiary form!

Kathleen Wilson is the author of "Quick Decorating Ideas Under \$20: The Budget Decorator's Bible" and the editor of The Budget Decorator, a free ezine dedicated to the "budget impaired" home decorator. For more free ideas and for information on her book, please visit her at <http://www.TheBudgetDecorator.com>.

## Great Spring Break Destinations

**By Gray Rollins**

If you're looking for something a little bit different from the usual beach house or hotel and want to have a spring break that you'll really remember, consider taking a cruise for spring break or heading to the slopes. Both can be a lot of fun, and can be more memorable than the same type of beach that you've visited for years.

### Taking a Cruise

One of the best parts about cruising is that you get to go to more than one beach. No experience is quite like cruising, and there's something wild about catching up with spring breakers at all of the different hot spots. Cruises are especially great for those people who can't make up their minds, since spring breakers can choose cruises that stop at many different places.

It's no surprise that spring break cruises are gaining in popularity. A lot of the worst parts of spring break, like not knowing where to eat or which bar or casino is the safest, are not a worry on a cruise ship. The one fee that you pay includes a place to stay, entertainment, and food to eat. You'll still need to bring cash, of course, but you'll be spending it on souvenirs and poker chips instead of gas for the rental car or to pay for parking.

When you're planning a spring break cruise, make sure to choose a ship that advertises as a spring break party cruise. If you and your friends book cabins on the first cheap cruise you find, you'll have fun and see a lot of cool stuff, but you won't get that spring break experience that comes from spending time around a bunch of crazy college kids. Instead, you're likely to be cruising alongside a lot of families with little kids, who won't be too happy when you start your spring break partying.

If the idea of spending a week on a boat doesn't appeal to you, then make sure you take a cruise that includes hotel stays at your destination beaches. These cruises can really be the best of both worlds, because you'll get to enjoy all of the ship's amenities and also have time to really explore some of the world's best beaches.

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### Heading to the Slopes

If you're athletic or are looking for something other than sand and sun for your spring break vacation, consider a ski trip. You'll find plenty of other spring break skiers and snowboarders on your trip, as Colorado ski resorts were number 10 on the list of top spring break destinations for 2006.

There are a lot of benefits to taking to the slopes for spring break. You'll be able to find fabulous package deals designed for spring breakers, and it can be a lot of fun to board with your buddies instead of your parents. Also, spring break is a great time to improve your skills. While your friends in Acapulco nurse their sunburns, you can learn some really cool new moves.

Some of the best places to head for include:

– Steamboat Springs, Colorado – Crested Butte, Colorado – Winter Park, Colorado

Be sure to book your vacation at a place that caters to spring breakers. Some resorts really go out of their way to offer entertainment designed for college kids, including concerts, clubs, and plenty of parties. Resorts that don't go out of their way to make spring break fun aren't worth the money, and you might end up feeling like you made the wrong choice.

Gray Rollins is a featured for for

.&nbsp; For tips on planning spring

break on a budget, visit

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